

In the Claims:

1-3. (Cancelled)

B, 4. (Currently Amended) A [The] remote transaction station [of claim 2], comprising:
an inventory of products; and
at least one special product;
said remote transaction station operative to dispense said at least one special product at
random to a customer, and to vend a product selected by the customer in the same transaction.
wherein said at least one special product is randomly distributed within said inventory of
said remote transaction station.

5. (Currently Amended) The remote transaction station of claim [2] 4, further comprising an
optical detector operative to detect and identify an optical indicia on said at least one special
product.

6. (Currently Amended) The remote transaction station of claim [2] 4, further comprising a
radio frequency receiver operative to detect and identify a radio frequency signature produced by
said at least one special product.

7. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 6, wherein said at least one special
product contains an active radio frequency transmitter producing said radio frequency signature.

8. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 6,
wherein said radio frequency receiver additionally comprises a radio frequency
interrogator, and
wherein said at least one special product contains a passive radio frequency transceiver
producing said radio frequency signature responsive to a radio frequency interrogation signal.

9. (Currently Amended) The remote transaction station of claim [2] 4, further comprising a
magnetic detector operative to detect a magnetic marker on said at least one special product.

10. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 9, wherein said magnetic marker may be selectively set to a sensitized state wherein it is detected by said magnetic detector or a desensitized state wherein it is not detected by said magnetic detector.
11. (Currently Amended) The remote transaction station of claim [2] 4, further comprising a sonic detector operative to detect and identify a sonic source on said at least one special product.
12. (Currently Amended) The remote transaction station of claim [2] 4, further comprising a detector operative to detect and identify a reactive element on said at least one special product.
- B₁ 13. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 12, wherein said detector operates responsive to an effect selected from the group consisting of inductive coupling and capacitive coupling.
14. (Currently Amended) The remote transaction station of claim [2] 4, further comprising an oscillator, and wherein said at least one special product is detected by a perturbation in a frequency of said oscillator caused by said at least one special product.
15. (Currently Amended) The remote transaction station of claim [2] 4, further comprising:
a first detector operative to detect the dispensing of either said selected product or said at least one special product; and
a second detector operative to detect the dispensing of said selected product but not the dispensing of said at least one special product; and
wherein the dispensing of said at least one special product is identified by the lack of indication from said second detector.
16. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 15, wherein said second detector is selected from the group consisting of an optical detector, a radio frequency detector, a sonic detector, a reactive detector, and an oscillator.
17. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 15, wherein said special product is

dispensed generally simultaneously with said selected product.

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18. (Currently Amended) A [The] remote transaction station [of claim 17], comprising:
a first inventory of products; and
a second inventory of at least one special product;
said remote transaction station operative to dispense said at least one special product at
random to a customer, and to vend a product selected by the customer in the same transaction,
wherein said at least one special product is stored separately from said first inventory,
and is dispensed to the customer along a channel distinct from that by which said selected
product is dispensed.

19. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 18, wherein the dispensing of said at least one special product is triggered on a pseudo-random basis.

20. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 19, further comprising a microprocessor, wherein said microprocessor is operative to generate a pseudo-random number at least at the beginning of each transaction, said pseudo-random number being operative to trigger said dispensing of said at least one special product.

21. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 20, further comprising a wireless communication interface operative to effect a function selected from the group consisting of product selection and product payment, wherein said pseudo-random number generated by said microprocessor is related to an identification code transmitted to said remote transaction station over said wireless communication interface.

22. (Original) The remote transaction station of claim 19, wherein the odds of said at least one special product being dispensed is dependent on the method of payment for said selected product.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Currently Amended) A [The] remote transaction station [of claim 23,] for vending at least one product comprising digital data, wherein at least one special product comprising digital data is additionally dispensed at random with a selected product, in the same transaction, further wherein said product and said special product are retrieved from a location remote [from] by said remote transaction station prior to dispensing said product and said special product.

25. (Withdrawn) A system for vending products to a customer, comprising:
an inventory of products;
at least one special product;
a payment acceptance interface; and
a product dispenser operative to dispense said at least one special product at random to the customer, and to vend a product selected by the customer in the same transaction.

26. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 25, wherein said payment acceptance interface comprises a cash acceptor.

27. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 25, wherein said payment acceptance interface comprises a magnetic stripe card reader.

28. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 25, wherein said payment acceptance interface comprises an optical reader operative to read an optical indicia from a card presented by the customer, that uniquely associates the customer with an account to which the purchase is charged.

29. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 25, wherein said payment acceptance interface comprises an RFID reader operative to read a transponder in the customer's possession, said transponder transmitting code to said reader that uniquely associates the customer with an account to which the purchase is charged.

30. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 25, further comprising an image capture and processing system operative to uniquely identify a customer, said customer being associated with an account to which the purchase is charged.

31. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 25, wherein said payment acceptance interface comprises a biometric sensor operative to uniquely identify a customer, said customer being associated with an account to which the purchase is charged.

32. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 25, wherein said inventory of products comprises at least two distance products, and wherein said system further comprises a product selection interface.

B, 33. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 32, wherein said product selection interface comprises a plurality of selection buttons, each said selection button associated with a product, and each said selection button operative to select said associated product when actuated by the customer.

34. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 32, wherein said product selection interface comprises a tactile response display displaying a plurality of indicia, each said indicia associated with a product, said display operative to select said associated product upon tactile input proximate each said indicia by the customer.

35. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 32, wherein said product selection interface comprises an audio input transducer operatively connected to an audio processor, said audio processor operative to interpret voice selection commands spoken by the customer.

36. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 32, wherein said product selection interface is operative to receive product selections entered by the customer on a remote device.

37. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 36, wherein said remote device comprises a mobile radiocommunication terminal.

38. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 36, wherein said product selection interface and said remote device communicate via a short-range radio frequency network interface.

39. (Cancelled)

40. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 39, wherein said remote transaction station comprises an inventory wherein said product and said special product are commingled, and wherein said remote transaction station further comprises a detector operative to detect said special product as it is dispensed, and wherein said transaction station subsequently dispenses said selected product when said special product is selected.

B, 41. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 40, where in said detector is selected from the group consisting of an optical detector, a radio frequency detector, a sonic detector, a reactive detector, and an oscillator.

42. (Currently Amended) A [The] method of [claim 39] randomly dispensing a special product from a remote transaction station to a customer, comprising:
receiving a selection input for a selected product from the customer;
dispensing said selected product to the customer; and
randomly dispensing a special product to the customer; and
wherein if said special product is dispensed, both said special product and said selected product are dispensed to the customer in the same transaction, [wherein] said remote transaction station contains said selected product and said special product in separate inventories[, and --
wherein said remote transaction station further comprises a controller operative to generate a special product dispensing signal at random, said special product dispensing signal operative to dispense said special product to the customer].

43. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 39, wherein accepting payment from the customer comprises operation of a device selected from the group consisting of cash acceptor, optical card reader, magnetic stripe card reader, RFID reader, image capture and processing system,

biometric sensor, mobile radiocommunication terminal interface and short-range radio frequency network interface.

44. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 39, wherein receiving a selection input from the customer selecting a product comprises operation of a device selected from the group consisting of product selection buttons, touch-screen display, voice recognition, mobile radiocommunicaiton terminal interface and short-range radio frequency network interface.

45. (New) A method of randomly dispensing a special product from a remote transaction station to a customer, comprising:

receiving a selection input for a selected product from the customer;

dispensing a dispensed product to the customer in response to said step of receiving;

detecting if said dispensed product is a special product; and

if said dispensed product is a special product, repeating said dispensing and said detecting steps until said dispensed product is said selected product;

said remote transaction station comprises an inventory of products including said selected product and one or more special products, wherein said one or more special products are randomly distributed throughout said inventory.

46. (New) The method of claim 45, wherein said detecting step comprises detecting said special product as it is dispensed via a detector selected from the group consisting of an optical detector, a radio frequency detector, magnetic detector, a sonic detector, a reactive detector, a inductive detector, a capacitive detector, and an oscillator.

47. (New) The method of claim 46, wherein said detector is said radio frequency detector, and said detecting step further comprises detecting and identifying a radio frequency signature produced by said special product.

48. (New) The method of claim 45, wherein said detecting step comprises:
detecting the dispensing of either said selected product or a special product wherein said special product does not contain information indicative of said selected product; and

identifying a special product by detecting the lack of information from said step of detecting.

49. (New) The method of claim 48, wherein said detecting the dispensing of either said selected product or a special product step comprises detecting the dispensing of either said selected product or a special product via a first detector selected from the group consisting of an optical detector, a radio frequency detector, magnetic detector, a sonic detector, a reactive detector, a inductive detector, a capacitive detector, and an oscillator.

50. (New) The method of claim 49, wherein said detecting the dispensing of said selected product step comprises detecting the dispensing of said selected product via a second detector selected from the group consisting of an optical detector, a radio frequency detector, magnetic detector, a sonic detector, a reactive detector, a inductive detector, a capacitive detector, and an oscillator.